

Story 1902 (1995 Tape 4)

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The Laz<sup>1</sup> and the Dead Horse

One day Temel<sup>2</sup> decided to buy a horse. He had a friend named İdris who was a horse dealer, and Temel knew that İdris would give him a bargain on a horse. After he had bought and paid for a horse, Temel said to İdris, "I want you to shoot this horse for me."

İdris said to Dursun, one of his assistants, "Shoot this horse for Temel."

Dursun was confused by this order. He said, "There is really nothing wrong with this horse. Do you really want me to kill it?"

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<sup>1</sup>The word Laz referred originally to an ethnic minority living primarily in Trabzon and Rize provinces, along the extreme eastern part of the Turkish Black Sea coast. More recently the word has come to be applied to any resident of the entire Turkish Black Sea coast. In the Turkish oral tradition Laz people are stereotyped as being stupid or inept. This stereotype (like most others) is unjustifiable, for Lazes are, of course, much like other people.

<sup>2</sup>In tales about the stereotyped Laz as dummer or fool the male characters usually have one or another of five or six very common Laz names. Temel is the name used most often, with Dursun in second place. Thus if either of these names occurs in a folktale, the audience knows at once that it is a Laz tale. İdris and Hızır are also popular Laz names.

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“Yes, shoot this horse. The customer is always right,” answered

After the horse had been shot, Temel said, “Put the body of the horse in a truck and take it to my house.” Dursun followed Temel’s direction and soon arrived with it at Temel’s home. Temel then said, “Get a couple of men to help you carry this horse up to the second floor of my house. Put it in the bathroom there, sitting up in the bathtub.”

Dursun carried out Temel’s orders exactly, but he was very curious about the whole situation. As he was about to leave, he said, “I cannot help wondering about all of this. Why are we doing such strange things?”

Temel then explained the whole matter to Dursun. “I have a named Fadime who always pretends to know everything. Nothing is ever news to her. Whenever I try to tell her about something that has just occurred, she always says to me, ‘Oh, I know that. I heard all about it!’ I want to beat her at her own game just once. She went to visit her mother today, but she will return this evening. When she arrives, she will at once go up to the second floor and go to the bathroom. There she will see the dead horse sitting in the bathtub. I know that she will become very excited and run downstairs to me and

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say, 'Oh, Temel, Temel! There is a dead horse in our bathtub!' Then I shall say very calmly, 'Yes, I know that.'